



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 42

July, 2011

This newsletter is published by the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit, U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. If there are any particular topics you are interested in, please contact ACS at: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

Inside this issue:

New Consular Emergency Phone Number	2
Travel Warnings and Alerts	2
Expats' Social Security Benefit in China	3
Virginia State & Local Primaries to be Held August 23	4
Shanghai Taxis Increase Fares	4
Appointments Mandatory for Routine ACS Services	5
Preparing for Summer Travel	6
ACS Address, Phone, Fax, Hours, and Website	6

Special points of interest:

- * News: Owners, Tenants Must Register
- * Child Travel Reminder
- * Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

Looking for Emergency Response Team Volunteers

If you are living in East China and are interested in serving the American citizen community here the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai has an opportunity to volunteer. We are looking for volunteers for our Emergency Response Team (formerly our Warden system). Volunteer ERT member **responsibilities include:**

1. In an emergency, the American Citizen Services Unit would reach out to ERT members to request assistance in contacting specific American citizens. This contact would be case-specific, based on the nature and location of the incident rather than a mass-list of all American Citizens in that district.
2. In an emergency the American Citizen Services Unit may need ERT members to share information with Americans in their area. The Consulate has no way to contact the many Americans who have not registered their presence at travelregistration.state.gov. We would look to our ERT members to share information with the U.S. citizens in their networks (social, professional, online, etc) in the event of an emergency.
3. Emergency Response Team volunteers must respect the privacy of individual Americans and not release any information concerning American citizens, except to the U.S. Consulate General in

Shanghai.

While there is no formal time commitment, we expect that volunteers are available via email and/or phone and willing to assist in the event of an emergency.

If you are interested in volunteering please send the following information to ShanghaiACS@state.gov and put "ERT volunteer" in the subject line.

- Your full name and U.S. passport number.
- Current address (if in Shanghai please include what district you live in)
- Preferred email address
- Current phone number (mobile and home if you have both)
- Current place of employment (name and address). This helps us know where our ERT members are in the event of an emergency.
- Current groups you are affiliated with (schools, local social networks, volunteer groups, blogs, housing complexes, etc). This helps us know who our ERT members may be able to get the message out to in the event of an emergency.
- Your Level of familiarity with Mandarin Chinese language.

On behalf of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai, we thank you for your service to the American citizen community in our consular district.

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

A full list of all of our holiday closings is online at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/holidays.html>. The Consulate will be **CLOSED** on the following days:

August 4, Thursday: Administrative Day

New Consular Emergency Phone Number: 021-3217-4650

To our fellow U.S. citizens in Shanghai, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang:

U.S. Consulate's new consular emergency phone number (American Citizen Services) is: 021-3217-4650.

We are pleased to announce that our afterhours phone number is now the same as our daytime phone number: 021-3217-4650. Please note that the phone options have changed as well. Please delete the old afterhours ACS number from your records (old: 6433-3936).

From 8am to 5pm, calls to the new phone number are answered by the small staff in our American Citizen Services (ACS) unit. Afterhours ACS calls are routed to a central operator.

Afterhours calls related to ACS matters requiring immediate assistance **will be forwarded to the Consulate's Duty Officer.**

Non-emergency ACS questions can be sent to us by email: ShanghaiACS@state.gov. We hope that you will check our website first: <http://shanghai.usconsulate.gov> or <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn>. Another great resource is <http://travel.state.gov>, which has travel advice, procedural instructions, information on conditions in every country on the planet, downloadable forms, and much, much more.

A quick reminder, too, that the American Citizen Services (ACS) unit of the **Consulate's Consular Section is not at**

the same location as the main consulate building. The main consulate is at the corner of Huaihai Lu and Wulumuqi Lu, but the ACS office is at 1038 W Nanjing Rd - Westgate 8th floor - 梅龙镇广场8楼 (Mei'long'zhen guang'chang).



Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is advisable that you and your family review your personal security profile and to be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new Travel Warnings for the following countries:

<u>Colombia</u>	07/22/2011
<u>Congo, Democratic Republic of the</u>	07/19/2011
<u>Libya</u>	07/19/2011
<u>Republic of South Sudan</u>	07/12/2011

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

The U.S. Department of State also has issued new Travel Alerts:

<u>Japan</u>	07/19/2011
<u>Tunisia</u>	07/08/2011

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at :

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and prohibited items on flights can be viewed online at

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

For additional information, please visit "Americans Traveling Abroad" on the U.S. Department of State website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html. Students traveling abroad may wish to visit the State Department site designed for them: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>.

To obtain up-to-date information on security conditions, please call 1-888-407-4747 (toll free in the United States), or +1-202-501-4444 if you are outside the United States.

News: US Expats to Enjoy Social Security Benefit in China

(from chinadaily.com.cn) Beijing – Beginning in July, Americans in China will enjoy the same social security rights as Chinese nationals but the new law means they will have to pay dual fees to both nations for separate coverage.

The Social Insurance Law will take effect on July 1 of this year and will for the first time apply to all foreigners living with a visa in China. "Foreign workers and employers will pay a similar rate of insurance contribution from their incomes to the government, as Chinese workers do," said Bai Liangze at the Chinese Academy of Personnel Science, who is familiar with social welfare regulations.

There are 71,493 US citizens working and living in China, which makes up about 12 percent of China's total foreign population, according to the sixth national census released by the National Bureau of Statistics in April. Up until now, employers of foreign workers in China have reimbursed employees for

their medical and maternity expenditures because it costs less for employers and employees each year. "Foreign employees who work in China for longer than six months must be included in the social security system," said Xu Yanjun, a deputy director at the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. "They need to contribute to pension accounts for at least 15 years to collect a pension after retiring."

The new law will allow foreign employees to receive similar medical, work injury, disability, unemployment and maternity benefits in China. In the US, most Americans in most cases can only receive social security benefits after they retire, Chinese nationals are partially reimbursed for medical expenses through China's social security net. Shanghai-based law firm Haworth and Lexon estimated that a foreigner holding a working visa in Shanghai will pay a maximum 1,285 yuan (\$198) per month to the central government after the Social Insurance Law goes into effect. In Beijing, a

Chinese national pays between 1,000 yuan to 1,200 yuan a month. The new law's monthly payments, taken automatically from monthly paychecks, will be on top of existing income taxes. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security still has not released details about what foreigners will be paying to the central government each month but said it will do so after July 1.

Currently, Chinese nationals (depending on which province they live in) pay at least 14 percent of their monthly income to social security: 11 percent to pensions, 2 percent for medical and 1 percent for unemployment. In Beijing, employees don't pay part of their monthly salaries for maternity or disability benefits. In the US, the social security tax rate is 12.4 percent. But joining the Chinese social security system means a US citizen will have to pay two social security contributions, one fee in China and another in the US.

(Continued on Page 6)

News: Owners, Tenants Must Register

(from Shanghai Daily, Jul. 14, 2011) Property owners and tenants must register their contracts with the city starting in October under threat of punishment for the first time, senior government officials said yesterday.

From Oct. 1, new rules will start across the city as Shanghai moves to further regulate the mainstream residential leasing market. Some 30 million square meters of residential space are rented, Pang Yuan, deputy head of the Municipal Housing Support and Building Administration Bureau, told a press conference in announcing the rules.

Under the new law, real estate agencies will be responsible for such registration if they help bridge the deals, whereas individual owners and tenants should register their activities themselves with local community affairs service centers. The registration must take place within 30 days of contract signing.

Real estate agencies failing to comply will face fines of 3,000 yuan (US\$463) to 30,000 yuan if they refuse to register after receiving notice from local housing authorities. Individuals who sign the deals on their own will be charged a maximum 1,000 yuan for violations, while enterprises can be fined up to 10,000 yuan.

A maximum two-month deposit will be allowed and homeowners will not be allowed to raise rents if leases are signed for one year or less. Only one increase is allowed per year if such contracts are longer than 12 months. Homeowners should also inform their tenants one month in advance of the lease's expiration if they don't want to renew the contract.

The new rules will cover all mainstream residential leasing agreements whether

they are signed after or before October 1, officials said. (Mainstream excludes special affordable-housing programs for low-income residents.)

"Such rules have certainly indicated local housing authorities' good wishes and efforts but in my opinion, it may be better for the government to offer incentives, rather than impose fines," said Song Huiyong, research director of Shanghai Centaline Property Consultants Ltd, operator of the city's largest real estate chain by transaction value.

The local housing authority has also clarified that tenants should have a minimum per capita space of at least 5 square meters as it furthers its efforts to crack down on group renting. Owners are not allowed to rent their properties to those who cannot provide identity cards or business licenses.

Virginia State & Local Primaries to be Held August 23

On Tuesday, August 23, 2011, Virginia will hold their 2011 primaries for local and General Assembly offices. If you are a registered voter in Virginia or believe that you may be eligible to vote in Virginia and are a member of the uniformed service on active duty, a member of the Merchant Marines, a Virginia resident currently residing overseas, or a spouse of one of the above, you may be eligible to vote on August 23. Please review the following information to determine if you are eligible or **contact the Virginia State Board of Elections at their toll free # 1-800-552-9745 or your local registration office.**



District lines have been redrawn and recent changes might have changed what local, State Senate or House of Delegates district(s) in which you vote.

To determine if you have been affected by redistricting please visit www.sbe.virginia.gov, from the State Board of Elections website you can verify if you are eligible to vote in one of the upcoming primaries. UOCAVA voters may also be eligible to register for an absentee ballot for the Primary and future elections. **Please note that applications for absentee ballots and the Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA) continue to be accepted for the Primary Election.** Also, if you are a Virginia resident and eligible for voter registration, you may be eligible to register to vote and request an absentee ballot simultaneously for any August 23, 2011 Primary races.

Finally, if you are a UOCAVA voter and have applied to receive an absentee ballot automatically for races in which you are an eligible voter, you should have received an absentee ballot by July 8 for your eligible Primary races (including political party primaries). You will receive your ballot by email or mail, depending on the option you originally selected for the ongoing absentee ballot. If you are unsure about your status as an ongoing absentee voter

please email info@sbe.virginia.gov and a SBE staff member will assist you. Again, please note that absentee ballots will be available on July 8, 2011 and all eligible ongoing absentee voter ballots were sent on that date or before.

For a more detailed guide and additional information please see the Virginia State Board of Elections' release for Absentee Voting for Military Personnel, their families and Overseas Voters: http://www.sbe.virginia.gov/cms/Absentee_Voting/Military_Overseas_Citizens/Index.html.

Additional Information

FVAP can be contacted via 1-800-438-8683. Citizens may reach FVAP toll-free from 67 countries by using the toll-free numbers listed on the FVAP website, www.fvap.gov/contact/tollfreephone.html. Questions regarding the above may also be referred to the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, Department of Defense, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC, 20301-1155, vote@fvap.gov, and on the World Wide Web at www.fvap.gov.

Shanghai Taxis Increase Fares

Watch out penny-pinchers, on July 8, taxi fares were raised by 2 RMB. The flag-down fare will rise from 12 RMB to 13 RMB and a 1 RMB surcharge will be applied to every trip, according to the Shanghai Development and Reform Commission. The night-trip price has also risen from 16 RMB now to 18 RMB under the new policy.

According to Global Times, the new policy is the city's response to rising oil prices and is replacement for a fare-hike initiative proposed earlier this year that

aimed to increase the salary of cab drivers, some of the city's most poorly paid workers.

Since it takes time to upgrade all of the meters of the city's 49,000 cars, the two price policies will coexist until the end of the month.

In order to stem the rising tide of illegal taxis that may try and capitalize on the anticipated failing taxi demand, the city will also intensify its crackdown on unlicensed transporta-

tion.



Reminder: Appointments Mandatory for Routine ACS Services

As the number of U.S. citizens residing in and visiting our Consular District (Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui provinces) has grown rapidly in recent years, the number of people who come to the Shanghai ACS office for consular services has grown just as quickly. In light of this and our limited physical space, we must strictly enforce our mandatory appointment policy for non-emergency services. The objective of this policy is to reduce customers' wait time (especially during high demand periods) and to reduce crowding in our waiting room.

The ACS unit has had a mandatory appointment policy since 2009. Visitors may receive multiple services during the same visit -- please make a separate appointment for each service (e.g., to apply for passports and obtain a notary service, make two appointments). Arrive a few minutes before your appointment to allow time to go through security.

ACS appointments must be made using our website: **shanghai.usconsulate.gov** or **shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn**

In addition, we have a one-in/one-out system to accommodate a limited number of people who are unable to make an appointment or who need a service prior to the first available appointment. Each person who arrives without an appointment must wait outside our office until the previous person without an appointment departs. We try our best to accommodate as many customers as we can each day. Because the time required to serve a customer varies widely (depending on factors like the complexity of the

service, amount of data-entry and data-verification required, etc.), it is not possible to predict how long a person without an appointment will wait to be served. If you come without an appointment, your wait might be twenty minutes or more than two hours. If you arrive without an appointment and there are already many others without an appointment waiting ahead of you, you may be asked to return to our office at another time/day.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

The following services do not need an appointment:

- Report an emergency or urgent matter (e.g., death, hospitalization, or arrest of a U.S. citizen)
- Report a passport lost / stolen / damaged when you urgently need to travel outside of China -- bring proof of impending travel. (Note: lost/stolen passports must **immediately** be reported to the Exit-Entry Bureau, a unit of the Chinese police.)
- Register with the Consulate or Register to vote (both easy to do online)
- Pick up passports, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (CRBA) and/or Re-Entry Permits
- Pick up Social Security or tax refund checks
- Follow up on a case for which you have already paid -- Must present your receipt and/or your "Please Note Checked Items" letter.
- American Citizens' Visa Hour at 4pm on Tuesday.

Child Travel Reminder

It is important to remember to get all appropriate travel documentation for your child prior to departing China. A U.S. passport alone is insufficient to exit China and travel to the U.S. As a foreign citizen residing in China, your child must have either a Chinese visa or travel permit to depart the country. You may apply for a Chinese visa or travel permit for your child at a nearby office of the Exit & Entry Bureau (EEB) in the province where the child was born.

Apply for a Chinese Visa if...

If neither parent is a Chinese citizen, you are required to report to EEB within one month of your child's birth and apply for a Chinese Visa. The Chinese visa will be placed in the child's U.S. passport. In addition to going to EEB within 30 days to apply for a visa, some parents also

choose to register their child at the local PSB police station within 30 days of birth. While registering at a PSB police station does not fulfill EEB's requirement that you apply at EEB within 30 days, it is nonetheless a step some parents take as a precaution.

Apply for a Travel Permit if...

If one parent is a Chinese citizen and one is a foreigner, you are required to apply for a one-time Chinese Exit & Entry Travel Permit (different from a Chinese visa) at EEB in order for your child to travel outside of China. The Chinese travel permit will be an independent book.

For details on applications for Chinese visas and travel permits, please contact the EEB office in your area. In Shanghai, the EEB hotline is (021) 2895-1900.

Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

If you are departing the Shanghai consular district and you formally joined the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), please do not forget to end your enrollment when you leave. You can end your enrollment by visiting the <https://travelregistration.state.gov> site if you previously enrolled through this site.

If you previously submitted a paper enrollment form to the U.S. consulate, you may un-enroll yourself by sending an email request to:

ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

**U.S. Consulate General,
Shanghai, China**

**1038 West Nanjing Road, 8/F
Westgate Mall 梅龙镇广场**

(Méi lóng zhèn guǎngchǎng)

Tel: (86-21) 3217-4650

Fax: (86-21) 6217-2071

After Hours Emergencies:

(86-21) 3217-4650

Open 8:00am - 11:30am

and 1:30pm - 3:30pm

**Monday to Friday *Closed on
Wednesday afternoons, weekends,
and holidays.**

<http://shanghai.usconsulate.gov>

Preparing for Summer Travel

It's summer holiday time. If you are planning to travel please read the following suggestions to help ensure a stress-free trip.

Know your passport expiration date.

The passport validity of a child under 16 years of age is only five years compared to an adult passport's 10-year validity. **Some countries (including China) will not allow a traveler to enter the country if the traveler's passport will expire in the next six months.** Airlines will deny boarding to those who do not meet this requirement. For further details about visas and the entry and exit requirements of the countries you plan to visit, please visit www.travel.state.gov.

Plan ahead to renew your passport.

Citizens may, of course, apply for passports at the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai. However, the passports are actually printed in the United States and not at the Consulate. For this reason, a new passport is usually ready for pick-up at our office about **10 business days** after the application was submitted. This does not include the time to secure a visa from China or another country, or other unexpected delays. Please visit our website at http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/u.s.passport_renewals.html for information regarding passport renewal requirements, and to make an appointment with the Consulate. It's never too early to renew your passport; most people find it best to apply at least 6 to 12 months before expiry.

Register with the Embassy/Consulate in the country where you will be visiting.

The Department of State encourages U.S. citizens living overseas or planning to travel abroad to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. By enrolling in STEP, we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements and will also make it easier for the Embassy/Consulate to contact you in the event of an emergency. You should remember to keep all of your information in STEP up to date; it is particularly important when you enroll or update your information to include a current phone number and e-mail address.

Inform Your Family/Friends of Your Travel Plans:

Tell those you trust about your travel plans, including your transportation, hotel, and local contact information, so that they know how to reach you in the event of an emergency. Keep a copy of your passport and China visa not in the same place you keep your passport.

News: US Expats to Enjoy Social Security Benefit in China

(From Page 3) The fortunate thing is that a foreign employee who is eligible to enjoy a pension but has left China can make arrangements with a Chinese embassy to continue receiving the Chinese pension after they've moved. The Chinese law will also permit the balance of an individual's pension account to be inherited by his or her offspring. Bai Liangze said the law gives equal treatment to foreigners working in the country and follows international practices. But he pointed out that the public housing fund (where employers help pay toward future housing for employees) will not be available to foreign workers at the moment. Target groups include foreigners employed by Chinese and foreign-owned companies, factories, public institutions, foundations, social groups, schools, accounting and law firms that register in China, as well as foreign employees assigned to China by overseas companies.

According to [Chinadaily.com.cn](http://chinadaily.com.cn), at least one American is delighted about the new law. An engineer at a renewable energy company said the regulation would benefit Americans working in China. But the China Daily website reported that some US companies think the new law may result in a decrease of a company's net savings and an increase in their personal management costs in China.

~~~~~  
For other assessments, see <http://tmagazine.ey.com/new-social-security-law-potentially-affects-foreign-nationals-working-in-china/> or <http://www.towerswatson.com/newsletters/global-news-briefs/4873> or <http://www.troutmansanders.com/foreigners-caught-by-chinas-new-social-security-law-06-24-2011/>.

(By Zhong Nan And Li Aoxue, [chinadaily.com.cn](http://chinadaily.com.cn))